Panel investigating Oswald, CIA links

Ex-spy agency employe says he's sure JFK killer was double agent

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House Assassinations Committee is reported checking a former CIA employe's hearsay testimony that Lee Harvey Oswald, President John F. Kennedy's accused murderer, was involved in a CIA project in Japan.

The onetime CIA worker, James B. Wilcott, said in a telephone interview Tuesday that although the information was hearsay, he is convinced it is true. Wilcott also said he personally concluded that the CIA planted Oswald in Russia to be a double agent.

The committee refused to comment on whether it was looking into the matter. But sources confirmed the panel is checking the allegation just as it does most tips that it gets concerning the Nov. 22, 1963, assassination of Kennedy in Dallas.

One source said, however, that the CIA project Wilcott learned about could have been the CIA's U-2 spy flights out of Atsugi Air Base in Japan. The source said Oswald had some connection with the CIA operation as a Marine Corps radar operator.

Wilcott said in the interview that he told the committee he was a CIA finance officer in Tokyo when Kennedy was assassinated, and that he began hearing the next day that Oswald had been with the CIA there.

Several weeks later, he said, a CIA case officer told him one of the CIA projects to which Wilcott had disbursed money was a project involving Oswald.

Wilcott said he had no idea what the project was because finance officers knew little about the projects they disbursed money to, knowing them only under the code names, which they called "cryptos."

Wilcott said he put into writing his recollection of the conversation involving Oswald and gave a copy to the committee.

"I was talking with someone, I can't recall who for sure, and I expressed disbelief about Oswald even being a CIA project," Wilcott said in the written recollection.

"I was told something like, 'Well, Jim, so and so drew an advance sometime in the past from you for Oswald' or 'for that project under such and such a crypto.' "

Wilcott said he had other conversations with CIA operations people, and that although he cannot recall their details, he does remember the conclusion he drew from them: that the CIA put Oswald in Russia as a double agent.

He said he was also told that the CIA trained Oswald to speak Russian and that Oswald was briefly returned to one of the CIA stations in Japan after he left Russia.

Wilcott said that although he is convinced Oswald was a CIA double agent, he has no way of knowing whether that means the CIA was involved in Kennedy's assassination.

He said he gave the House committee the names of six or seven people he believes would know for certain Oswald's alleged CIA connections in Japan, if there were any other connections that the rumored U-2 radar job.